

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for automatically enforcing one or more parking spaces, comprising:

5 a vehicle sensor for determining whether a vehicle is parked in the one or more parking spaces;

a vehicle identification device for capturing one or more images of one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle parked in the one or more parking spaces, wherein the one or more unique characteristics are used to identify an owner of the vehicle; and

10 a parking meter comprising

a processor,

a memory,

15 a file storage unit comprising a violation manager for determining whether a violation has occurred and generating a notice of violation in response to the violation, and

20 a communications unit for transmitting the notice of violation, and the one or more images or the one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle, via a network to a central receiving office, wherein the central receiving office identifies the owner of the vehicle from the one or more images and creates a

summons for the owner of the vehicle in response to the notice of violation;

wherein the processor, the memory, the communications unit, and the file storage unit are connected via a system bus, and

wherein the vehicle sensor and the vehicle identification device are operatively connected to the parking meter.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle sensor is a weight sensor.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle sensor is an induction loop.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises at least one of a digital video camera, a digital still camera, an analog video camera, and an analog still camera.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises a robotic arm attached to the at least one of a digital video camera, a

digital still camera, an analog video camera, and an analog still camera.

5 6. The system of claim 4, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises a swivel attached to the at least one of a digital video camera, a digital still camera, an analog video camera, and an analog still camera.

10 7. The system of claim 4, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises an analog-to-digital converter for converting analog images to digital images.

15 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises a timer for determining the amount of time the vehicle parks in the one or more parking spaces.

20 9. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle identification device comprises a time and date logger that logs the time and date the one or more images are captured and superimposes the date and time in the one or more images.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter is at least one of a single-bay parking meter and a multi-bay parking meter.

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11. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter comprises a timer for determining the amount of time elapsed since money was deposited in the parking meter.

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12. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter comprises an analog-to-digital converter for converting analog images to digital images.

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13. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter comprises a time and date logger that logs the time and date the one or more images are captured and superimposes the date and time in the one or more images.

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14. The system of claim 1, wherein the central receiving office mails the summons to the owner of the vehicle.

15. The system of claim 1, wherein the central receiving office comprises a database of vehicle records from one or more state driving records agencies.

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16. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter further comprises a parking availability unit for determining availability of the one or more parking spaces.

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17. The system of claim 16, further comprising a sign for displaying the availability of the one or more parking spaces.

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18. The system of claim 1, wherein the one or more unique characteristics comprises at least one of a license plate, a state registration sticker, and a vehicle identification number (VIN).

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19. The system of claim 1, wherein the communications unit comprises a modem.

20. The system of claim 1, wherein the vehicle sensor and the vehicle identification device are operatively

connected to the parking meter via an interface device.

5 21. The system of claim 1, wherein the parking meter further comprises a character recognition unit for extracting the one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle from the one or more images.

10 22. The system of claim 1, wherein the central receiving office further comprises a character recognition unit for extracting the one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle from the one or more images.

15 23. A system for automatically enforcing one or more parking spaces, comprising:

a vehicle sensor for determining whether a vehicle is parked in the one or more parking spaces;

20 a vehicle identification device for capturing one or more images of one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle parked in the one or more parking spaces, wherein the one or more unique characteristics are used to identify an owner of the vehicle; and

an interface device comprising

- a processor,
- a memory,
- a file storage unit comprising a violation

5 manager for determining whether a violation has occurred and generating a notice of violation in response to the violation,

- a communications unit for transmitting the notice of violation, and the one or more images or the

10 one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle, via a network to a central receiving office, wherein the central receiving office identifies the owner of the vehicle from the one or more images and creates a summons for the owner of the vehicle in response to

15 the notice of violation; and

- a module for interfacing with a parking meter;

wherein the processor, the memory, the communications unit, the file storage unit, and the

20 module are connected via a system bus, and

wherein the vehicle sensor and the vehicle identification device are operatively connected to the interface device.

24. A system for automatically enforcing one or more parking spaces, comprising:

a vehicle sensor for determining whether a vehicle is parked in the one or more parking spaces;

5 a vehicle identification device for capturing one or more images of one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle parked in the one or more parking spaces, wherein the one or more unique characteristics are used to identify an owner of the vehicle;

10 a module for interfacing with a parking meter; and

an interface device comprising

a processor,

a memory,

15 a file storage unit comprising a violation manager for determining whether a violation has occurred and generating a notice of violation in response to the violation, and

20 a communications unit for transmitting the notice of violation, and the one or more images or the one or more unique characteristics of the vehicle, via a network to a central receiving office, wherein the central receiving office identifies the owner of the vehicle from the one or more images and creates a

summons for the owner of the vehicle in response to
the notice of violation;

wherein the processor, the memory, the
communications unit, and the file storage unit are
5 connected via a system bus,

wherein the vehicle sensor and the vehicle
identification device are operatively connected to the
interface device, and

wherein the interface device is operatively
10 connected to the module.